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ABSTRACT

As part of the ongoing effort to provide and maintain quality educational programs and services for students, the San Diego Community College District conducted a comprehensive student satisfaction survey during fall 2001. This article provides a brief summary of this survey research including instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, results and recommendations for conducting study satisfaction surveys. Development of the student satisfaction survey instrument was based on the matriculation components, the district's previous accreditation survey, and accreditation standards. In addition to conducting a field test to examine the survey for wording, clarity, ease of use, and appropriateness, the authors also conducted an on-campus pilot test in spring 2001. The full administration of the survey took place in fall 2001 using a random sample of classes. Survey responses were collected from 80% of classes selected and a total of 9,024 responses were obtained district wide. Correlational analyses, t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests were performed. Results showed that students with high satisfaction with the campus climate theme were also satisfied with curriculum and instruction, physical facilities, academic development, and personal development themes. African Americans and Hispanics generally expressed higher satisfaction, while whites reported lower satisfaction with their college experience. (RC)

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Developing and Conducting A Student Satisfaction Survey

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Key Words: Student Satisfaction, Student Services, Student Survey

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Introduction

Providing high quality education has been the focus of all levels of education across the nation. One of the ways education institutions accomplish this goal is by continuously collecting information on student satisfaction, a key quality enhancement tool designed to improve the quality of student experience. Colleges and universities have been using student satisfaction data to better understand, improve and change campus environments, thereby creating settings more conducive for student development (Beltyukova & Fox, 2002). Additionally, student satisfaction data have high utility as a baseline measure for different types of assessment of student learning outcomes, necessary for internal purposes as well as responding to external demands for accountability (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996).

As part of the ongoing effort to provide and maintain quality educational programs and services for students, the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) conducted a comprehensive student satisfaction survey during fall 2001. In addition, the timing of this effort was prompted by the matriculation and accreditation site visits. Therefore, in consultation with the district matriculation and accreditation committees as well as Student Service Council (SSC), the Office of Institutional Research and Planning developed and conducted this survey. Survey yielded high response rate and generated very valuable information on various aspects of students' college experience. This article will provide a brief summary of this survey research including instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, results, and recommendations to conduct student surveys.

Instrumentation

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Development of the student satisfaction survey instrument was based on the matriculation components, the district's previous accreditation survey, and accreditation standards. The draft survey were reviewed and approved by SSC and matriculation committee. A field test was conducted by administering the draft survey to a small group of students who examined it for wording, clarity, ease of use, and appropriateness.

Next, an on-campus pilot test was conducted in spring 2001. A factor analysis was performed and 14 factors were generated (see Table 1). Some items were re-grouped to different factors. Twenty-two items which did not cluster with any of the factors were taken out. The final instrument contained 127 questions. The reliability of the final survey was established by

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calculating a Cronbach's Alpha for each factor in order to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. Results suggested that the instrument met reliability standards.

Table 1: Factor Analysis and Reliability Results (n =558)

	Factors	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
	Services-Level of Importance	22	0.96
	Services-Level of Satisfaction	22	0.91
Factor 1	Admissions and Course Registration	5	0.68
Factor 2	Orientation	4	0.92
Factor 3	Assessment	4	0.90
Factor 4	Counseling/Advising	7	0.94
Factor 5	Follow-up of Student Academic Status	4	0.80
Factor 6	Course Availability	3	0.72
Factor 7	Curriculum and Instruction	11	0.90
Factor 8	Course Scheduling	3	0.63
Factor 9	Physical Facilities	9	0.85
Factor 10	Campus Climate	8	0.86
Factor 11	Financial Aid and Fees	3	0.72
Factor 12	Support Services	5	0.81
Factor 13	Academic Development	4	0.83
Factor 14	Personal Development	6	0.82
	Demographics	7	N/A
	Total	127	0.96

Data Collection

Students were surveyed using a random sample of fall 2001 classes. Surveys were administered to students by faculty during class time. For the selected classes in the sample, faculty was first contacted in May 2001 about the upcoming survey so they could incorporate the survey time into their course syllabi. Second letter was sent out to faculty at the beginning of the fall 2001 semester to confirm the survey dates. Survey packages (including a cover letter to faculty, survey instructions, survey questionnaires) were sent to faculty before the planned survey dates. Four weeks were allotted in order to give faculty sufficient time to administer the surveys in class and return them to the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Follow-up letters and emails were sent to those who did not return their survey packages. Survey responses were collected from 80% of classes selected for the study (survey packages were sent out to 681 classes and 543 classes returned the survey). A total of 9,024 responses were obtained districtwide.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in the following ways:

1. Demographic comparisons between the survey respondents and the general student population.
2. Gap analyses: A discrepancy indicator (gap) was computed by subtracting the level of importance from the level of satisfaction with student services. Results were interpreted based on Noel-Levitz's (2000) gap analysis matrix:
   - High importance/high satisfaction areas - high performance areas
   - High importance/low satisfaction areas - areas that need improvement
   - Low importance/high satisfaction - low priority areas
   - Low importance/low satisfaction - low priority areas
3. Analyses of survey themes: Each of 14 factors (in Table 1) represented one survey theme. An average percent of satisfied responses ("strongly agree" and "agree") was calculated for each of the 14 factors (see table 1).
4. Analyses of situational and background questions: Responses to the situational and background questions were summarized by calculating the frequencies and percentages.
5. Satisfaction was broken down by gender, ethnicity, age, day/evening status, new/continuing status, and part-time/full-time status.
6. Correlational analyses, t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were performed to identify associations and differences between/among demographic groups.
7. Content analysis: A content analysis was performed to identify themes from students' comments.

Results

Demographic distributions of the respondents were very similar with the corresponding distributions of the student population; therefore, respondents were representative of the general student population at all colleges.

Gap analyses showed that parking services, campus book store, counseling, and cafeteria received high importance but low satisfaction ratings, suggesting a need for improvement. In contrast, admissions process, course registration process, curriculum/instruction, and Leaning Resource Centers received high importance and high satisfaction ratings (see Tables 2, 3).

In terms of satisfaction with survey themes, *admissions and course registration* theme received the highest satisfaction ratings, followed by *support services, curriculum and instruction*, and *academic development* themes. Questions addressing the *follow-up of student academic status* theme received the lowest satisfaction ratings (see Table 4).

Correlational analyses, t-tests, and one-way ANOVA tests were performed. Results showed that students with high satisfaction with the *campus climate* theme were also satisfied with *curriculum and instruction, physical facilities, academic development, and personal development* themes. In comparison with other ethnic groups, African Americans and Hispanics generally expressed higher satisfaction, while whites reported lower satisfaction with their college experience. Older students reported higher satisfaction than younger students.

Content analysis of student comments showed that inadequate parking, cost of books and food, inadequate library hours, and poor quality of counseling services were major concerns expressed by students.

This survey yielded very useful information for administrators, student service professionals, accreditation self-study committees, and matriculation committees. After analyzing the survey results, a comprehensive research report was produced and distributed across the district. Research report was very well received and results have been widely used by various groups and committees.

Recommendations

This effort of assessing students' satisfaction with various aspects of their college life at SDCCD was extremely successful. Besides the high response rate (80%), we also obtained a very large and representative sample. The success of this student satisfaction survey resulted from a well-prepared survey plan and the collaboration between the research staff and the faculty. Based on this experience, I would like to provide the following recommendations:

- Plan early: For large-scaled student surveys, you need to plan months early. It is very helpful to lay out a detailed plan including ordering the supplies, producing the survey, getting the download from MIS, when to contact faculty, when to send out survey package, how to do follow-ups, and how to manage data entry etc. It could be very overwhelming without carefully planning.
- Sample courses: We randomly selected courses (instead of individual students) as the unit of administering the survey. Our experience suggested that students were more likely to respond if given by faculty during class-time; therefore, survey by classes would encourage high response rate for student surveys.
- Work with faculty: Faculty's support played a major part in this successful survey research. Communication was the key. Faculty were fully informed prior to the survey dates. Besides 2 letters (signed by assistant chancellor of student services) sent out to faculty, Vice Presidents of student services at each college also advocated this survey at various occasions. In addition, we received a large quantity of inquires about the purposes of this survey, survey date, and procedures from faculty. We always had someone available to answer the questions and tried to respond as quickly as we could.

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Table 2: Importance and Satisfaction Crosstab – Rank Ordered (n=9,024)

Services	High Importance/High Satisfaction Areas*	Services	High Importance/Low Satisfaction Areas**
Admissions Process	89.6%	Parking Services	63.6%
Course Registration Process	88.8%	Cafeteria/Snack Bar	31.8%
Curriculum/Instruction	87.5%	Campus Bookstore	30.0%
Learning Resource Center	86.9%	Academic Counseling	23.8%
Computer Labs	85.8%	Financial Aid Service	20.3%
Library Facilities and Services	85.1%	Transfer Center	16.2%
DSPS	84.1%	New Student Orientation	14.4%
Tutoring Center	81.4%	Accounting/Cashier Office	13.3%
EOPS	80.5%	Library Facilities and Services	11.5%
Transfer Center	78.5%	Tutoring Center	11.2%
Assessment/Testing Center	77.1%	EOPS	11.0%
Health Services	76.6%	Assessment/Testing Center	10.4%
Accounting/Cashier Office	75.9%	Computer Labs	10.0%
Financial Aid Service	74.4%	Curriculum/Instruction	9.7%
Student Affairs/Activities Office	73.7%	Student Government	9.0%
Affirmative Action Office	73.1%	Course Registration Process	8.8%
Academic Counseling	72.5%	Student Affairs/Activities Office	8.8%
New Student Orientation	69.7%	Health Services	8.6%
Student Government	64.0%	Affirmative Action Office	7.4%
Campus Bookstore	61.7%	Learning Resource Center	7.2%
Cafeteria/Snack Bar	51.0%	Admissions Process	6.4%
Parking Services	30.4%	DSPS	6.3%

**High Importance/High Satisfaction Areas: percent selected important (very important or important) and satisfied (very satisfied or satisfied) with the service*

*** High Importance/Low Satisfaction Areas: percent selected important (very important or important) but dissatisfied (very dissatisfied or dissatisfied) with the service*

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Table 3: Gaps between Level of Satisfaction and Level of Importance-Rank Ordered (n=9,024)

Services	Gap*
Parking Services	-58.5%
Campus Bookstore	-23.7%
Academic Counseling	-19.0%
Cafeteria/Snack Bar	-17.0%
Financial Aid Service	-10.6%
Transfer Center	-8.8%
Library Facilities and Services	-7.5%
Curriculum/Instruction	-6.9%
Course Registration Process	-6.5%
Computer Labs	-3.9%
Admissions Process	-2.5%
Accounting/Cashier Office	-1.8%
Tutoring Center	-1.1%
Learning Resource Center	1.1%
EOPS	2.5%
Assessment/Testing Center	5.3%
New Student Orientation	5.4%
DSPS	6.3%
Student Affairs/Activities Office	14.1%
Health Services	14.4%
Student Government	20.9%
Affirmative Action Office	21.6%
AVERAGE	-3.5%

* *Gap indicates discrepancy between the percent of satisfaction (very satisfied and satisfied) and the percent of importance (very important and important)*

Table 4: Satisfaction by Survey Themes –Rank Ordered (n=9,024)

THEMES	Satisfaction*
Admissions and Course Registration	90.6%
Support Services	88.9%
Curriculum and Instruction	88.6%
Academic Development	88.2%
Course Scheduling	86.9%
Campus Climate	86.2%
Physical Facilities	84.9%
Financial Aid and Fees	82.8%
Personal Development	81.1%
Course Availability	77.2%
Counseling/Advising	75.5%
Orientation	74.6%
Assessment	73.5%
Follow-up of Student Academic Status	58.4%
TOTAL	81.2%

* *Satisfaction included percent of "strongly agree" and "agree".*

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